

# **St George's CE Primary School Attendance & Punctuality Policy**



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## **MISSION STATEMENT**

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*St. George's C of E Primary School seeks to provide a place where children can realise their full potential and maximise their academic achievement within a safe, caring, Christian setting.*

### **We aim to ensure:-**

- That children enjoy their time in school and feel happy, safe and valued.
- That children reach their potential in all areas of the curriculum and acquire appropriate and useful skills and knowledge which will prepare them to become independent learners.
- That work is well planned and provides realistic challenges and targets for future progress.
- That children grow throughout school to become responsible citizens who respect others and are becoming ready to take their place in future society.
- That the Christian ethos provides a stimulating, supportive and purposeful environment.

### **As a school we aim to:**

- Maintain an attendance rate of a minimum of 96%.
- Maintain parents' and pupils' awareness of the importance of regular attendance.

### **Good attendance is important because:**

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and poor attendance.
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically.
- Regular attenders find school routines and school work easier to cope with.
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying.
- Regular attenders have an easier transfer to secondary school.

### **As a parent you can help us by:**

- Ringing on the first morning of all absences with the reason and saying when the child will return.
- Arranging dental and doctor's appointments out of school hours or during school breaks.
- Sending in a note explaining the reason for absence on your child's return to school after an illness.
- Keeping us updated by telephone or letter if your child has an extended period of absence due to illness.

## **We shall:**

- Follow up unexplained absences by phone calls and letters as soon as possible. You will receive a text on the first morning of your child's absence.
- Remind parents of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality in newsletters.
- Acknowledge and reward good attendance e.g. through certificates and a weekly trophy for the best attending class in school.
- Publish your child's attendance rate on his/her annual school report.
- Let you know if we have concerns regarding your child's attendance.
- If we continue to have concerns make a referral to the Education Welfare Officer.

## **Authorised Absence**

Some absences are allowed by law and are known as 'authorised absences'. For example, if a child is ill, family bereavement, religious observance.

We realise that there are rare occasions when there might be a particular problem that caused your child to be absent. Please let us know as we shall try to deal with it sympathetically.

## **Unauthorised Absence**

There are times when children are absent for reasons, which are not permitted by law. There are known as 'unauthorised absences'. Examples of unauthorised absence are:

- Waiting on a delivery
- Going for a family day out
- Sleeping in after a late night
- Going shopping or for a hair cut
- Your child's birthday
- Unapproved holidays
- Where there is no explanation for the absence or where the explanation or reason for the absence is considered unsatisfactory.
- Unauthorised absences will be reported to the Local Authority. The Education Welfare Officer may contact you and consider taking legal action against you if your child has unauthorised absences.

## **Punctuality**

- Morning registration is at 8.55am. This is the time your child should be in class.
- Lateness is classed as any child coming into school after 8.55a.m. All children arriving after 8.55a.m. must report to the office. After 9.30am it is classed as an unauthorised absence.
- Lateness is monitored monthly. Where children have persistent lateness problems the Children and Families Officer will contact parents to discuss the matter.
- It is important to be on time as the first few minutes of the school day are often used to give out instructions or organise schoolwork for the rest of the day.

- If your child misses this short but vital session, their work for the whole day may be affected. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and often embarrassing for your child.
- Arrival after the close of registration may be marked as unauthorised absence in line with the DfE guidance.
- You will be contacted to discuss the matter further if your child is regularly late for school.

### **Term Time Leave of Absence**

We are always concerned about the amount of school time pupils miss as a result of family holidays. There is no entitlement to time off in term time. Leave of absence is only allowed at the discretion of the Headteacher in accordance with the school policy as agreed by the board of governors.

#### **It is our policy:**

- That only in exceptional circumstances will holidays be allowed during term-time.(The cheaper cost of holidays in term time is not an acceptable reason for an application).
- There is no entitlement to time off in term time. If your child has over 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence then they will automatically be issued with a fixed penalty warning. Therefore unless the application meets the exceptional circumstances criteria and your absence is for longer than 5 days the fixed penalty notice will be instigated.
- If your absence is less than 10 sessions (5 days) authorisation may still be refused if your child's attendance in the last 12 months has been below 96%. All absences will be included as part of the 5 days. If your child is away from school without permission for a period of one week (10 sessions) then any further instances of unauthorised absences will trigger the fixed penalty process.
- Try to minimise time out of school by timing holidays at either end of a school break.
- Avoid taking a holiday in September, as it is very unsettling for a child to miss the start of the school year. Avoid taking a holiday in SATs years (Year 2 and Year 6).
- If the school does not agree and you take your child on holiday, the absence will be unauthorised.
- Please remember that the more time your child misses from school, the more difficult it is for them to catch up with their work. Valuable learning time is lost. A good understanding of the work can only take place when the pupil is in the classroom. No holiday requests will be granted during the week in May in which SATs take place for Year 2 and Year 6.
- Any holiday application for a child with less than 90% attendance for whatever reason will be refused. Between 90% and 95%, a meeting will be arranged with the Headteacher. For authorisation to be given we would expect the pupil's attendance to be over 96%.

## **Response to absence**

If school has not been notified about a child's absence, a member of staff will contact the parent/carer on the first morning.

If the parent notifies the school of a child's reason of absence, but the child continues to be absent for more than a week then an update check will be made by the school in the form of a phone call.

If the child continues to be absent the Children and Families Officer will either write to the parent/carer or consider a referral to the Education Welfare Officer or the school nurse.

If an absence is unexplained the school will write to the parents for an explanation. If no reason is forthcoming a phone call will be made.

Any absence considered not to be a justified reason will remain unauthorised. A series of unauthorised absences will trigger a meeting with the Children and Families Officer and the Education Welfare Officer.

Where children have persistent attendance problems the Children and Families officer will invite parents/carers into school to a formal meeting with the Education Welfare Officer.(Attendance Panel)

## **Recording**

The class teacher will take a register recording who is present and absent from school at 8.55am. At 9.00am the register is taken to the office. Any late pupils should then enter the school through the main entrance. If any pupil arrives late the time and reason for late arrival will be recorded. All staff need to be aware that any child arriving late MUST register at the office for purposes of fire regulations.

Afternoon registration is completed by 1pm and this is then taken to the office for both classes.

Reasons for absence may be offered verbally by phone. The school may then decide if it wishes to authorise the absence or record it as an unauthorised absence. This decision will be made within the guidance set out in the 1996 Education Act which identifies the following reasons as acceptable reasons of an authorised absence:

- The child is ill or is prevented from attending by unavoidable cause;
- The child lives over a certain distance from the school and either the LA has failed to make suitable arrangements to register the child at a nearer school or the LA has failed to make suitable transport arrangements.
- The child is absent on days exclusive set apart for religious observance in their particular faith.
- The child is absent 'with leave'. This refers to leave being granted by the school, not by the parent, and would normally relate to no more than 5 school days in any 1 year.

- A reason for a period of absence is always required. The school will contact parents who have not offered a reason.

### **Attendance Codes**

A set of standard codes is used consistently within the register. These codes are input into the register as required and are used to give more meaning to the register and provide statistical data.

### **Requests for Leave of Absence**

If parents wish to request a period of leave they are required to complete an absence permission form. If the request is denied the school will inform the parent of the reason by letter and the request will be noted in the register. Leave of absence will not be offered to pupils for family holidays except under exceptional circumstances.

### **Monitoring**

The Children and Families Officer and the Education Welfare Officer will review the attendance of all the pupils on a regular basis and any pupils identified as a concern having less than 90% attendance more often. A letter will be sent to the parents of any pupil identified as having attendance problems informing them of the school's concerns and offering support to resolve any problems that may be impeding a child from attending. The pupil's attendance will be closely monitored and if after another month there appears to be no improvement the parents of the pupil will be invited to a meeting with the Children and Families Officer to discuss the issue and hopefully resolve any issues preventing the pupil from attending. If the parents do not attend the meeting or after such meeting the attendance of the pupil does not improve a formal referral to the Educational Welfare Officer will be made. The registration system provides reports and information that assist the school to monitor attendance. These reports will be accessed and provide information to assist the school to manage attendance issues strategically. The Education Welfare Officer will also have access to this information and will use the reports to support their role.

### **Children Missing Education**

When pupils leave and cannot be contacted then the child is considered to be a Child Missing Education. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out an investigation into the whereabouts of the child. A referral will be made to the CME team by the Children and Families Officer.

### **Legal Note**

Parents have a legal duty to ensure the regular and full time attendance at school of registered pupils (Education Act 1996). The Education Welfare Officer aims to work

with schools and families to promote good attendance and avoid legal action. However, in some cases, parents are prosecuted or have to pay a Fixed Penalty fine for unauthorised absences.

We value your support in helping us to maintain standards.

### **Penalty Notices**

A penalty notice may be issued as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and requires the recipient to pay a fixed amount. If the penalty notice is not paid within 42 days, the Local Authority must prosecute the parent/carer for failing to ensure regular school attendance.

Education Welfare may issue a penalty notice to parents/carers who are failing to secure their child's school attendance and are not engaging with supportive measures to improve attendance proposed by the school or Education Welfare Officers. Before a penalty notice is issued, parents will be warned of their liability to receive such a notice.

### **Equal Opportunities**

At St George's CE Primary School, all children have the right to achieve to their full potential, regardless of gender, race, culture, language, physical ability, special needs or socio-economic status. Therefore, all pupils are given appropriate support and encouragement to attend school regularly.